

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00608 101455Z

61

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, EI, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: FRUSTRATION OVER SUNNINGDALE DEADLOCK

SUMMARY: IMPASSE OVER IMPLEMENTATION OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT HAS CREATED FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION AND AIMLESSNESS THAT HELP NO ONE EXCEPT EXTREMISTS. HOTTEST CURRENT PROBLEM IS TO FIND MEANS OF PUNISHING NI FUGITIVES IN REPUBLIC, BUT THERE WOULD BE OTHER OBSTACLES EVEN IF THIS WERE OVERCOME. WE SEE NO OBVIOUS SOLUTION, BUT VARIOUS COMPROMISES ARE BEING EXPLORED. MOST PROMISING IS PROBABLY SPACING-OUT OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT, MAKING EACH MOVE CONTINGENT ON ACCOMPLISHMENT OF A REASONABLE PREVIOUS STEP. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE NOT HAD RECENT INSIDE BRIEFING ON GOI PLANS FOR NI PROBLEMS, AS ONLY AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES ARE TRAVELING. AS DEPT KNOWS FROM FONMIN FITZGERALD'S SPEECHES IN US, IRISH ARE STILL VOICING DETERMINED PUBLIC OPTIMITY OVER FUTURE OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AND INCREASING NOTE OF FRUSTRATION, AND SOME CONTACTS NEWX GOVTARE CLOSE TO DESPAIR.

2. HOTTEST CURRENT PROBLEM IS REPORT OF ANGOL-IRISH LAW COMMISSION. ONE MONTH AGO (DUBLIN 468), GOI TOLD US REPORT

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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 00608 101455Z

WOULD RECOMMEND "EXTRATERRITORIALITY", MEANING THAT FUGITIVES

FROM NI WOULD BE GIVEN NO-JURY TRIAL IN REPUBLIC RATHER THAN EXTRADITED. PUBLIC GOT NEWS SHORTLY THEREAFTER. MOST RECENTLY, PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT BOTH BRITISH AND NI MEMBERS OF COMMISSION WANTED EXTRADITION AND ACCEPTED EXTRATERRITORIALITY ONLY AS SECOND BEST. UNFORTUNATELY, NOTHING SHORT OF EXTRADITION WILL SATISFY MANY NI PROTESTANTS. IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND THEIR CONCERN, EVEN THOUGH WE ESTIMATE THAT, IN PRACTICE, DUBLIN'S SPECIAL COURT WOULD GET IRA FUGITIVES BEHIND BARS PROMPTLY. WHATEVER LEGAL MERITS OF COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION, EXTRATERRITOTIALITY HAS OBVIOUSLY BECOME A POLITICAL HAZARD FOR SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT RATHER THAN A HELP, AS WAS INTENDED. BRITISH AND IRISH HAVE THEREFORE DELAYED PUBLICATION OF COMMISSION'S REPORT. ISSUE IS SO HIGHLY POLITICIZED THAT IT SEEMS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO SOLVE. SOME PEOPLE CLOSE TO GOVT HERE ARE ACTUALLY BEGINNING TO TALK OF EXTRADITION, BUT GOVT'S ABILITY TO COPE WITH IT IS DOUBTFUL. SUSPICIONS OF NI COURTS ARE STILL PREVALENT. IN RECENT PAST SUCH SUSPICIONS WERE JUSTIFIED, AND TIME HAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY HEALED OLD WOUNDS. ISSUE THUS BECOMES EXCELLENT MICROCOSM OF IRISH INTER-COMMUNITY TROUBLES, WITH MYTHOLOGY ASSUMING AS MUCH IMPORTANCE AS FACT ON BOTH SIDES.

3. AS LONG AS FUGITIVE PROBLEM IS UNSOLVED, THERE IS ALSO DEAD-LOCK ON IMPLEMENTING REMAINDER OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT, MOST CONTROVERSIAL PORTION OF WHICH IS COUNCIL OF IRELAND. MANY HERE FEAR THAT FAULKNER WOULD BE COMMITTING POLITICAL SUICIDE IF HE AGREED TO ENTER COUNCIL UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. AT SAME TIME, ANY OBSERVERS FEAR THAT, AT THIS RATE, PASSAGE OF TIME IS MAKING IT HARDER RATHER THAN EASIER TO IMPLEMENT SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT. THERE IS SOME TALK OF IMPLEMENTATION "BY STEALTH," MEANING THAT NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN MINISTERS WOULD HOLD INCREASINGLY FREQUENT SUBSTANTIVE MEETINGS, CREATING A DE FACTO COUNCIL OF IRELAND WITHOUT ANNOUNCING IT. THIS TACTIC WOULD BE POSSIBLE COMPROMISE, BUT IT WOULD HARDLY END FEELING OF DRIFT. GOI HAS STUCK TO LINE THAT NEITHER IT NOR SDLP CAN AFFORD LONG DELAY IN ACHIEVING FORMAL COUNCIL OF IRELAND.

4. ONE SIGNIFICANT NEW FACTOR IS WIDESPREAD PUBLIC BELIEF THAT BRITISH INTEND WITHDRAW TROOPS IN FINITE FUTURE. AGAIN, FACTS MAY BE LESS RELEVANT THAN CONVICTIONS. TROOP WITHDRAWAL SCARE IS CAUSING WIDESPREAD CONCERN IN REPUBLIC AS WELL AS IN NORTH. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 00608 101455Z

5. ALMOST EVERYONE IS POINTING TO PROVO IRA SUCCESSES AS EVIDENCE TO PROVE HIS FAVORITE POINT. PROTESTANTS COMMONLY SAY THERE CAN BE NO FURTHER PROGRESS UNTIL VIOLENCE IS CURBED; CATHOLICS REPLY THAT PROVOS CANNOT BE BEATEN UNTIL THERE IS SOME FRAMEWORK FOR ALL-IRELAND COOPERATION.

6. PROVOS, UNDRSTANDABLY, ARE ONLY ONES WHO SOUND HAPPY. THEIR

SUCCESS IN MAINTAINING VIOLENCE IS REMARKABLE, CONSIDERING THAT THEY FACE EFFECTIVE SECURITY MEASURES AND THAT MOST OF CATHOLIC COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT IRELAND WANTS THEM TO STOP BOMBING. ONE RECENT REMARK BY A TOP PROVO IS WORTH NOTING AS AN EXAMPLE OF CONFIDENCE: RUAIRI O BRAIDAIGH, DURING TV INTERVIEW, SUGGESTED THAT BRITISH SHOULD MAKE AN ORDERLY WITHDRAWAL FROM NORTHERN IRELAND, NOT PULLING OUT OVERNIGHT AS BELGIANS DID IN CONGO AND LEAVING TERRIBLE DISORDER. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THIS IS FIRST TIME IN IRISH HISTORY THAT AN EXTREMIST REPUBLICAN HAS SUGGESTED BRITISH SHOULD DELAY DEPARTURE BY ONE SECOND. PROVOS ARE CERTAINLY NOT SOFTENING TOWARD BRITISH, HOWEVER; IRA SIMPLY BELIEVES IT IS WINNING AND IS LOOKING REALISTICALLY TO NEXT STEPS. PROVOS ARE SHOWING SOME CONCERN ABOUT SECTARIAN MURDERS BY PROTESTANTS, BUT THEY ARE ALSO AWARE THAT SUCH KILLINGS WILL MAKE MANY CATHOLICS EVEN MORE RELUCTANT TO TURN AGAINST IRA "PROTECTORS."

7. COMMENT: LACK OF AN EFFECTIVE POLICY FOR TACKLING NI TROUBLES IS IN ITSELF A HAZARD -- AND A HELP FOR EXTREMISTS. NEW DECISIONS ARE THEREFORE SEEM LIKELY IN NEAR FUTURE. WE STILL THINK THAT BASIC INGREDIENTS OF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT ARE CORRECT AND THAT NO MAJOR CHANGES WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN ANY REAL ATTEMPT AT A SOLUTION. OF VARIOUS TACTICS UNDER DISCUSSION, ONE THAT SOUNDS BEST TO US (BUT NOT NECESSARILY TO GO) IS SPACING OUT SUNNINGDALE STEPS OVER LONGER PERIOD, ALLOWING MORE TIME FOR EASING OF SUSPICIONS IN OPPOSING COMMUNITIES. TO BE SUCCESSFUL, HOWEVER, THIS TACTIC WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE EXPLICIT -- NOT "STEALTHY" -- WITH EACH STEP CLEARLY BASED ON ACCOMPLISHMENT OF LOGICAL PRECEDING STEP. SUNNINGDALE MAY SIMPLY HAVE BEEN TOO BIG A CHANGE TO TAKE EFFECT ALL AT ONCE.

8. IN MEANTIME, VIOLENCE IS CONTINUING. WE THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO VIEW IMPASSE AS A RESULT OF DEEP COMMUNAL FEARS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 DUBLIN 00608 101455Z

NOT AS SHORTCOMINGS OF ANY ONE PARTY. EVERY FEW DAYS THERE IS ANOTHER "BAD GUY" IN THE PRESS: DUBLIN IS NOT EXTRADITING, LONDON IS HINTING AT TROOP WITHDRAWAL, NI PROTESTANTS ARE NOT ACCEPTING FAIR COMPROMISE, AND NI CATHOLICS ARE NOT TURNING PROVOS OVER TO POLICE. IN OUR VIEW, MEN OF VIOLENCE ARE ONLY REAL BAD
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